

MAYOR'S COMMITTEE FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

SEPTEMBER 15, 2008

MINUTES – Meeting in Newton City Hall – Cafeteria

PRESENT: Jane Brown, Rob Caruso, Lucie Chansky, Rosemary Larking, Girard Plante, Heather Platt, Doug Sweet (Co-Chair)
REGRETS: Jini Fairley, Jeff Hutter, Barbara Lischinsky, Jason Rosenberg
STAFF: Beverly Droz (Human Services), Kathleen Cahill (Planning & Development)
GUESTS: David Naparstek, Commissioner of Health & Human Services; Shirley Farnham, rep from the Council on Aging; Henry Korman, Chairman of the Fair Housing Task Force

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The meeting was called to order at 6:40pm and chaired by Doug Sweet.
Introductions were made and the guests were welcomed.

A motion to accept the minutes of the 8/18/08 meeting was approved.

NOMINATING COMMITTEE

Lucie reported that she spoke to each MCPD member and Rob Caruso has agreed to serve as Co-Chair. Rosemary and Girard are both willing to fill in as needed. Bev noted that Rosemary had previously expressed interest in being Co-Chair. Lucie suggested Rosemary be Chair of the Monitor & Access Committee which makes note of locations that have accessibility issues and brings them to the MCPD for discussion. Sometimes we send a letter of concern to the business or violator and we need to track this as well as any responses. Rosemary said she was interested.

A motion to appoint Rob as Co-Chair was made, seconded and passed unanimously.

There was brief discussion of sub-committees. Our Statement of Mission and Organizational Structure states: The MCPD shall have sub-committees which work, as needed, toward its goal of enhancing accessibility in the City, including but not limited to:

- Monitoring/Access
- Nominating
- Public Education
- Public Works (Snow, etc.)
- Transportation

The sub-committees will meet on an as-needed basis. Other committees may be created as needed. Sub-committee chairs are appointed by the MCPD Chair/Co-Chair with consensus from Committee members.

Fair Housing Task Force (FHTF) – presented by Henry Korman

(The Fair Housing Action Plan had been emailed to members in preparation for tonight's presentation.)

The MCPD welcomed Henry who has previously appeared before the Committee.

Henry outlined his presentation for tonight regarding the Fair Housing Action Plan and their Committee's desire to get various stakeholders like the MCPD, Human Rights Commission, and the Housing Partnership to endorse it. Then it will be presented to the Mayor.

He reviewed that the City receives CDBG funds from HUD. Newton is the lead in the Metro West Housing Consortium, and the City is obligated to affirmatively further fair housing. There are action steps and records of analysis of impediment, called AI. Until 2005, AI identified mostly lack of affordable housing. An ad-hoc group organized and saw that AI disregarded other barriers to fair housing, particularly protected classes. FHTF formed and for the last 3 years it has worked with tasks of revisions to AI.

In 2006, the Planning & Development Department Housing Office applied for, and later received a Fair Housing Education and Outreach Initiative grant (called FHIP) which has promoted the education, outreach and advocacy in the Metro West area through use of website development, brochures in many languages, 20 trainings for various stakeholders, and more.

Henry reviewed that the FHTF had the Fair Housing Center of Greater Boston conduct a housing discrimination audit of sales and rentals in 2005-2006 which revealed discrimination against four protected classes: familial status, source of income involving Section 8 vouchers, race, and national origin. In 2006 with the co-sponsorship of MCPD, they had the Disabilities Law Center conduct a disability discrimination audit which revealed barriers to equal housing opportunities for individuals with disabilities across all disability categories. Both audits were informational and they were confidential, hence not divulging which realtors had discriminated. The purpose of this was to identify the problems, then have meetings and trainings with realtors in an effort to address the problems together.

The Fair Housing Action Plan is divided into 4 sections. The introduction gives the statement of purpose, the background of AI to fair housing choice, the planning process and the action summary. Section 2, Action Plan Principles, documents 5 action plan principles including: reaching beyond a minimum fair housing requirements; education and outreach; accountability, compliance and enforcement; cooperation and collaboration; commitment of resources.

Section 3, Fair Housing Actions, details the need for: a) organization, staffing and resources; b) education, outreach and advocacy; c) monitoring and compliance; d) ongoing analysis of impediments and research. Section 4 – Where do we go from here? Implementation of the Plan – lists the 12 action steps from Section 3 in chart form, identifying who has principal responsibility for implementing the plan, who the lead stakeholders are who need to be included, a timeframe for implementation, and the resources required to undertake and complete each action step.

Henry stated he believed that the work of the FHTF revealed a lack of capacity in the City; that Architectural Access Board (AAB) regulations should be, by law, part of the building code at every step of both the building and inspectional permit process. He noted that the Public Buildings Department does not go through Inspectional Services (IS) for its own buildings. It was noted that IS Commissioner Lojek tried to take a lead on this whole issue but he lost the new hire last year who was to oversee all the AAB issues.

Henry concluded by saying that the priorities now are to ask the Mayor to: 1) endorse and adopt this Action Plan, 2) establish a fair housing body, 3) provide staffing and resources and 4) build the City's capacity.

A motion was made by Rosemary and seconded by Lucie for the MCPD to endorse and support the FHTF Action Plan and the creation of the fair housing body that would continue the work outlined in this plan. The **motion passed unanimously**.

Doug Sweet said he would commit to be the MCPD rep to the FHTF and will attend the upcoming meeting. The Committee thanked Henry for his time and efforts, and Henry thanked the MCPD.

CDBG Access Project Status Report – presented by Kathleen Cahill

This report was submitted to MCPD by email before this meeting for their review. Per usual it is copied here within the minutes. Discussion notes follow each topic as well as at the end of this report.

Accessible Pedestrian Signals (Project CD0703C. Expended, \$28,620; Budget balance: \$13,530). The installation of APS-10 audible pedestrian signals at the intersections of Walnut and Cabot and Beacon and Chestnut has been completed. Centre St. and Centre Ave. is a priority intersection; however that is on-hold

until pending the completion of a pedestrian improvement study conducted by VHB (contract is currently circulating for signatures). Washington St. and Commonwealth Ave. is another priority intersection. VHB is currently doing the design work for this intersection. We are hoping that the project will include accessible pedestrian signals funded from traffic mitigation funds. The installation of APS 10s at Washington and Beacon will be complete in September. Two additional locations, Commonwealth Avenue by St. Ignatius and Beacon and Hammond St. near McElroy Commons will also be completed in September.

- *It was noted that although the work on Walnut and Cabot and Beacon and Chestnut was estimated at \$4,200 the actual invoice for the work was \$3,600, a savings of \$700.*

Newton Centre Playground Walkway (Project CD0703A. Expended, \$24,927; Budget balance, \$5,072). The walkway is complete but adjustments need to be made per request from Parks and Recreation.

- *It was noted that the final invoices for this project have been held by Community Development staff until Parks and Recreation passes along the ok. DPW was contracted to create the pathway, however, the Parks and Recreation Department has not been satisfied with some of the work, so DPW is currently working to make necessary corrections. The accessible playground has been built; however, there has been no formal dedication because there were some compliance problems with several pieces of the play equipment.*

Norumbega Gardens (Project CD0903B. Budget balance, \$56,640). Project includes accessible improvements to interior pathways in the Norumbega Garden Apartments, a complex operated by the Housing Authority. Work to begin September 16, 2008, expected to be complete by late November.

- *It was noted that Kathleen has visited the site and taken pictures prior to the beginning of work and she plans to also take pictures after the work is completed. Girard reported that crews were there today to start painting and prepping.*

Charlesbank Playground (Project CD0903C. Budget balance, \$30,000). Project includes the installation of a ramped concrete walkway with metal handrail, designed to complement new play equipment, benches, and picnic tables.

- *It was noted that no start date yet has been set yet.*

Coletti-Magni Park (Project CD0903D. Budget balance, \$30,000). Project includes installation of accessible sidewalks around the park's perimeter as well as an accessible ramp and drinking fountain. Work began September 2, 2008.

- *It was noted as part of this project new curb cuts will be installed across Bridge Street, providing accessible routes both to Adams Street and West Street. These intersections both have audible pedestrian signals. There was discussion that dogs shouldn't be drinking from water fountains in these parks.*

Curb Cuts (Project CD0903G, Budget balance, \$69,068). Funds will be used to pay DPW for curb cuts completed in late FY08 and early FY09.

- *It was noted that as discussed in August, funds will cover the list of curb cuts. Lucie asked about the Hammond Pond Parkway– Boylston Street curb cuts. Kathleen said that the City will be using mitigation funds from Avalon Bay at Chestnut Hill funds and possibly Chestnut Hill Square to reconfigure the intersection at Hammond Pond Parkway and Boylston. Both the committee and staff agreed that it would make more sense to wait (even if it means 12-24mths) for this intersection to be reconfigured prior to installing new cut-throughs and curb cuts.*

Retrofitting Curb Cuts (Project CD0903E, Budget balance, \$6,000). A list of 5 locations (20 curb cuts) has been identified by committee members and staff. Work will begin in early October.

- *It was noted that Kathleen and Heather have been in touch and developed a list of potential curb cuts for retrofitting with contrasting color. Kathleen will talk to Steve Tocci to see if there can be a package deal of 22 curb cuts for the price of 20.*

FY09 Funds (Project CD0903A. \$15,045) – This project represents funds available for project(s) to be determined.

Further Discussion

Girard suggests that a priority for the \$15k be the Walnut Street side of the main entrance to City Hall, and the Chestnut Street and Commonwealth Avenue intersection on the north side of Comm. Ave.

Kathleen has 2 suggestions from Rob Caruso: Oak and Webster, and Watertown and Broadway. She is still reconciling with DPW and the Committee will revisit the running list and continue to prioritize at the next meetings.

Girard suggested that Pleasant Street is not a priority. Kathleen said a family with a disabled child requested it along with other locations on the walking route to their school. There was further discussion of the prioritized list in the 8/18/08 minutes. Kathleen will re-email the list and look into what curb cuts are essential.

Rosemary said trucks still block the curb cuts at Union Street and Herrick Street. Doug will write a letter to the Police.

Kathleen created a map illustrating the location of the 60 curb cuts that were completed in FY08. It is estimated that to date the City has made about 5% of their total curb cuts complaint.

Other Business:

- **Lasell College**

It was noted that the President of Lasell College replied on 8/22/08 to Girard's letter of 8/6/08. He said the College gave thought to the request for financial assistance with sidewalk improvements on Woodland Rd. They think the improvements be in conjunction and consistent with an overall plan for the improvement of the road between Forest and Grove Streets. The letter noted they intend to engage various City of Newton departments in a conversation about how we can work together to improve the condition, safety and overall look of Woodland Rd. The letter indicated he had a meeting scheduled with the Mayor in early September. None of us has heard anything about the meeting. Girard will try to follow-up.

- **Handicapped Parking**

Bev reported that in the summer Ald. Salvucci had requested a temporary/emergency HP space for the residents at 155 Adams Street in Nonantum. Bev has just been contacted by David Koses to see whether MCPD wants to consider whether to make the space permanent when the Traffic Council meets on 9/25/08. It's a 2-family house and these older residents use to park at the end of the driveway but then had a staircase to climb. They have disabilities, and a HP placard and it is just a short distance from the HP space into the front entrance. On the other hand, David told Bev that Adams Street is narrow and has much traffic. The Committee said to ask the Traffic Council to extend the temporary HP space until they can further investigate the situation.

There was a motion to adjourn at 8:45pm.

The next meeting will be on Monday, October 20 at 6:30pm in the cafeteria.

Respectfully submitted by Bev Droz